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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 141775

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SUBJECT: INTSUM 578 - JUNE 5, 1978

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. ISRAEL. THE ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE CONTINUES TO REFLECT DISCONTENT WITH THE APPARENT PARALYSIS OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS. THE TWO MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS RELATE TO DMC AND LIBERAL PARTY DISSATISFACTION ON THIS SCORE. THE DMC COUNCIL ADOPTED ON MAY 31 A RESOLUTION THREATENING TO LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT UNLESS BEGIN ADOPTS A MORE ACTIVE PEACE POLICY. THIS RESOLUTION (THE "AMIT DOCUMENT") RESTATESTHE STANDARD DMC POSITION THAT ISRAELI POLICY SHOULD BE BASED ON SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS BUT NOT TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE JEWISH AND DEMOCRATIC CHARACTER OF THE STATE. THE RESOLUTION CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO REFRAIN FROM "ACTIVITIES LIKELY TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE OF MISTRUST" WHILE NEGOTIATIONS ARE UNDER WAY. IT ALSO REITERATED DMC OPPOSITION TO A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE.

2. THE DMC RESOLUTION DISPLAYS A CERTAIN LACK OF METTLE. THUS THE PARTY DID NOT UNEQUIVOCALLY SERVE NOTICE THAT IT WOULD LEAVE THE GOVERNMENT IF ITS CONDITIONS WERE NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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MET. RATHER, IT SAID THAT THE COUNCIL WOULD "CONSIDER" WHETHER TO REMAIN IN THE COALITION UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE DMC RESOLUTION IS SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKER AND LESS CREDIBLE THAN THE FIRM RESOLUTION OF THE NRP TO LEAVE THE COALITION IF BEGIN DOES NOT MEET ITS CONDITIONS FOR A HAWKISH POLICY.

3. ALTHOUGH MANY IN THE DMC ARE UPSET BY THE INABILITY OR REFUSAL OF DMC MINISTERS TO PERSUADE BEGIN TO MODIFY HIS POLICY ON THE WEST BANK ISSUE, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THESE MINISTERS ARE PREPARED TO SURRENDER THEIR PORTFOLIOS AND RETURN TO THE POLITICAL WILDERNESS. THE DMC IS BESET BY FACTIONAL ANTAGONISMS, PERSONALITY CONFLICTS, AND DIVISIONS OVER POLICY, STRATEGY, AND TACTICS. THE PARTY, AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, CONTINUES TO FARE POORLY IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. YADIN'S LEADERSHIP HAS PROVEN DEFICIENT, AND THE PARTY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO DELIVER ON ANY OF ITS MAJOR CAMPAIGN PLEDGES. PROSPECTS FOR A SPLIT OR GENERAL DISSOLUTION OF THIS UNSTABLE POLITICAL ORGANISM REMAIN STRONG. IN ANY EVENT, EVEN THE DEFLECTION OF THE ENTIRE DMC KNESSET DELEGATION WOULD NOT BRING BEGIN DOWN, ALTHOUGH HIS MAJORITY WOULD SHRINK DRASTICALLY.

4. THE ATTITUDE OF THE LIBERAL PARTY IS FAR MORE SIGNIFICANT IN DETERMINING THE SURVIVABILITY OF THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT. THE LIBERALS CONTINUE TO HAVE A VESTED INTEREST IN THE CONTINUATION OF THEIR 13-YEAR-OLD ELECTORAL

ALIGNMENT WITH HERUT, DESPITE DIFFERENCES OVER POLICY.
THEY REALIZE THAT A BREAK WITH HERUT COULD LEAD TO
ELECTORAL DISASTER FOR THEIR PARTY IN THE NEXT KNESSET
ELECTIONS.

5. MANY LIBERALS HAVE BEEN DISSATISFIED WITH BEGIN'S
CONDUCT OF FOREIGN AND SETTLEMENT POLICY. MOST OF THEM
ARE PRAGMATISTS, AND THEY ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED LEST THE
CHANCE FOR PEACE BE LOST. FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH
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EXPRESSED THE PRIVATE VIEW RECENTLY THAT, "IF THE LIBERALS
BELIEVED ISRAEL WAS MISSING A LAST CHANCE TO MAKE PEACE
ON REASONABLE TERMS WITH THE ARABS BECAUSE OF BEGIN'S
INFLEXIBILITY, THEY WOULD BRING DOWN THE BEGIN GOVERNMENT."
EHRLICH ASSERTED THAT A LABOR-LIBERAL-DMC COALITION,
EXCLUDING BOTH HERUT AND MAPAM, COULD BE ESTABLISHED IN
SUCH A SITUATION. HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE WOULD LIE
LOW UNTIL CONVINCED THAT EVENTS HAD FORCED HIS HAND.

6. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT EHRLICH DOES NOT ENJOY
A FREE HAND IN HIS OWN PARTY, WHICH HAS A POWERFUL HAWKISH
WING. THE VIEWS OF A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF LIBERALS ON
THE TERRITORIAL QUESTION THUS ARE CLOSER TO THOSE OF HERUT
THAN TO THOSE OF LABOR AND THE DMC. EHRLICH'S STATEMENT
CLEARLY CONTAINS AN ELEMENT OF BRAVADO.

7. REFLECTING THEMES HEARD FREQUENTLY FROM MANY ISRAELIS,
TWO SENIOR IDF OFFICERS EXPRESSED SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEWS
ON THE PEACE PROCESS, EMBASSY TEL AVIV REPORTED. THE
DIRECTOR OF IDF PLANNING, GENERAL TAMIR, INTIMATED THAT
HE WAS NOT UNDULY CONCERNED BY SADAT'S HINTS IN HIS
RECENT SPEECHES OF A "DEADLINE" FOR PEACE TALKS. HE
BELIEVES THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH EGYPT COULD BE RESUMED;
SADAT AND THE EGYPTIANS WANT PEACE. DIRECTOR OF MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE GAZIT, ON THE OTHER HAND, ADMITTED TO THE
EMBASSY THAT THE PEACE PROCESS HAS BECOME AN ENIGMA TO
HIM. HE CANNOT JUDGE WHETHER SADAT IS SERIOUS, OR ENGAGING
IN SOME CUNNING POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. ALTHOUGH THE ISSUES
ARE CLEAR, GAZIT HAS NO FIRM IDEA OF WHAT EGYPT'S
POSITIONS REALLY ARE. HE ARGUED THAT SADAT'S STANCE IS
CONSTANTLY CHANGING AND TAKING ON NEW FORMS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

8. LEBANON. WHILE WE DO NOT YET HAVE A DEFINITIVE REPORT
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ON WHAT EVOLVED IN LAST WEEK'S ASSAD-SARKIS TALKS IN
SYRIA, IT NOW APPEARS A SIGNIFICANT BREAKTHROUGH MAY HAVE
OCCURRED. BOTH EMBASSY DAMASCUS AND EMBASSY BEIRUT ARE
REPORTING A BREATH OF RESTRAINED OPTIMISM.

9. ACCORDING TO A RIGHTIST WHO IS OFTEN AN EMISSARY BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND LEBANESE, THE TWO PRESIDENTS HAD AGREED TO DEPLOY THE SYRIAN ARMY IN LEBANON DOWN TO THE LITANI, PROVIDED THE ISRAELIS TOTALLY WITHDRAW FROM LEBANON AS PROMISED, AND THEN TO DEPLOY THE LEBANESE ARMY IN THE UNIFIL AREA. (A TOTAL OF 3000 LEBANESE SOLDIERS IN TWO CONTINGENTS WOULD GO SOUTH.) EMBASSY BEIRUT COMMENTS THAT IF THIS INFORMATION PROVES CORRECT THE SARKIS-ASSAD SUMMIT MAY MARK THE BEGINNING OF A NEW PERIOD OF SYRIAN-LEBANESE COOPERATION IN RESTORING LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY NOT ONLY SOUTH OF THE LITANI, BUT ALSO IN THE AREA BETWEEN THE ZAHRANI AND THE LITANI.

10. THE SYRIANS SEEM OPTIMISTIC BECAUSE AFTER TWO YEARS IN LEBANON THEIR POLICY MAY BE ON THE VERGE OF BEARING FRUIT. EVENTS IN LEBANON FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MORE THAN A YEAR APPEAR TO BE MOVING IN DAMASCUS' FAVOR, ALBEIT SLOWLY. SYRIAN HOPES SEEM TO HAVE BEEN RAISED BY:

- (A) THE EXPECTATION OF ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL;
- (B) ARAFAT'S COOPERATION AND UNUSUAL RESOLUTION IN PURSUING A HELPFUL ROLE IN LEBANON; AND
- (C) EXPLOITABLE DIVISIONS WITHIN THE LEBANESE FRONT.
(RECENT CLASHES BETWEEN FRANJIYAH'S FOLLOWERS AND THE PHALANGE ARE ONE INDICATION THAT ASSAD HAS HAD SOME SUCCESS IN WEANING THE FORMER PRESIDENT AWAY FROM HIS CHRISTIAN ALLIES.)

11. DESPITE THIS APPARENT OPTIMISM, SERIOUS PROBLEMS WERE CONFIDENTIAL

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NOT ADDRESSED IN THE TALKS AND THE MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE AND SYRIAN TROOPS WILL NOT BE UNIVERSALLY POPULAR. THE PRIMARY PROBLEM REMAINS THE PALESTINIANS. THE QUESTION OF LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS AND OF PALESTINIAN REINFILTRATION SOUTH OF THE LITANI WILL NOT BE RESOLVED EASILY. UN SOURCES INDICATE THAT DESPITE ARAFAT'S PROHIBITION, PALESTINIANS CONTINUE TO ENTER UNIFIL CONTROLLED AREAS.

12. ARAFAT IS SAID TO BE SHOWING UNPRECEDENTED FORTITUDE IN RESISTING REINFILTRATION, BUT HE IS FACING SERIOUS CHALLENGES. IN THE PAST, ARAFAT HAS WEATHERED SUCH CHALLENGES, WHICH APPEARS AGAIN LIKELY, BY PLAYING ON THE DIVISIONS AMONG HIS OPPONENTS. THE OPPOSITION ELEMENTS THIS TIME ARE ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN THEIR UNITY BY FORMING A REFUSAL FRONT AND USING SOUTH LEBANON AS THE COMMON ISSUE TO OVERCOME DIFFERENCES. THE REFUSAL FRONT AGAIN OPENLY CHALLENGED ARAFAT CLAIMING THAT HE WAS ACTING ON HIS OWN IN TRYING TO CURB GUERRILLA ACTIVITY IN SOUTHERN

LEBANON.

13. LEBANESE-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS, WHICH WERE REPORTEDLY DISCUSSED BY ASSAD AND SARKIS, ALSO REMAIN A THORNY ISSUE. MOST OBSERVERS CONSIDER LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY AND THE PALESTINIAN VIEW OF THEIR CAUSE AS INCOMPATIBLE. NEVERTHELESS, THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS STRENUOUSLY CHALLENGED THIS SUPPOSITION OVER THE WEEKEND. TISHRIIN EDITORIALLY ASSERTED ON JUNE 2 THAT "THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE THROUGHOUT LEBANON'S TERRITORIES AND LEBANON'S SUCCESS IN CONSOLIDATING THE DEFENSE OF ITS FRONTIERS IS IN THE INTEREST OF ALL ARABS, INCLUDING THE PALESTINIANS. FOR THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION TO ADHERE TO THE AGREEMENTS CONCLUDED IS IN THE INTEREST OF THE ARAB STRUGGLE AGAINST ISRAELI EXPANSIONISM AND AGGRESSION." THE IMPLIED LIMITA-
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TION ON PALESTINIAN ACTIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON IN THIS EDITORIAL WILL NOT BE WILLINGLY ACCEPTED BY MOST PALESTINIANS.

14. THE LEBANESE CHRISTIANS WILL ALSO BE SUSPICIOUS OF THE ASSAD-SARKIS TALKS. NO DECISION WAS TAKEN ON WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN TO HADDAD AND HIS FORCES. PERHAPS EVEN MORE WORRISOME TO THE CHRISTIANS IS THE APPARENT DESIGNATION OF PRIME MINISTER HOSS, A MUSLIM, AS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THE FUTURE PALESTINIAN STATUS THROUGHOUT LEBANON. IN SUM, THE ASSAD-SARKIS TALKS SEEM TO HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS IN SOLVING THE SOUTH LEBANON PROBLEM. NEVERTHELESS, SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES REMAIN, AND PREVIOUS "BREAKTHROUGHS" HAVE, IN FACT, ACHIEVED LITTLE.

15. SAUDI ARABIA. EMBASSY PARIS REPORTS THAT KING KHALID'S VISIT TO FRANCE WENT OFF WELL BUT WAS APPARENTLY NOT THE OCCASION FOR ANY MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE SAUDIS SHOWED INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS IN AFRICA WITH PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR ERITREA. THE TWO SIDES COULD NOT AGREE ON MIDDLE EAST LANGUAGE IN THEIR COMMUNIQUE WITH THE RESULT THAT BOTH SIDES INSERTED THEIR OWN LANGUAGE. THE FRENCH VERSION REFLECTED NO CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS FORMULATIONS. A FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN NOTED THAT A MILITARY DELEGATION DID NOT ACCOMPANY THE KING, THEREFORE, A ARMS AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN IMPOSSIBLE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

16. EGYPT. THE NEW WAFA'D PARTY RESPONDED TO PRESIDENT SADAT'S POLITICAL CRACKDOWN BY DISSOLVING ITSELF. SADAT HAD ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO PURGE THE PARTY OF ITS OLD GUARD LEADERSHIP, WHICH WAS POLITICALLY ACTIVE BEFORE THE 1952 REVOLUTION. SADAT HAD INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD ALLOW THE PARTY ITSELF--WHICH HE LEGALIZED IN FEBRUARY--TO CONTINUE FUNCTIONING. BY DISSOLVING ITSELF,

THE PARTY HOPES TO PUT SADAT'S ACTIONS IN THE WORST
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POSSIBLE LIGHT AND TO MAKE THE POINT WITH THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE THAT SADAT'S LIBERALIZATION PROGRAM HAS BECOME A SHAM. THE RIGHT-OF-CENTER NEW WAFD HOLDS ONLY ABOUT 30 OF THE 360 SEATS IN THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, BUT THIS PROBABLY UNDERSTATES ITS TRUE APPEAL IN EGYPT. (UNCLASSIFIED)

17. OMAN. THE KILLING OF FIVE BRITISH TECHNICIANS LAST WEEK COULD MARK THE BEGINNING OF A NEW STRATEGY OF TERRORISM AIMED AT CIVILIANS BY THE POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF OMAN--A MARXIST GROUP DEDICATED TO OVER-THROWING THE CONSERVATIVE REGIMES OF OMAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF SHAYKHDOMS. SINCE DECEMBER 1975 WHEN OMAN, WITH THE HELP OF BRITISH ADVISERS AND SEVERAL THOUSAND IRANIAN TROOPS, FINALLY WAS ABLE TO DECLARE A GUERRILLA WAR WITH THE POPULAR FRONT OVER, THE REBELS HAVE CARRIED OUT ONLY

SPORADIC ACTIONS--MOSTLY AGAINST MILITARY TARGETS. THE REBELS HAVE BEEN AIDED BY SOUTH YEMEN IN THE PAST, AND BOTH THE SAUDIS AND NORTH YEMENIS HAVE BEEN PREDICTING RENEWED SOUTH YEMENI - SPONSORED TROUBLE IN THE AREA.

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